



State Trade and Export Promotion (STEP) Grant Program: FAQs

The Massachusetts Office of International Trade and Investment (MOITI), in collaboration with the Massachusetts Small Business Development Center Network (MSBDC) and the Massachusetts Export Center, recently launched the Massachusetts State Trade and Export Promotion (STEP) Grant Program through a grant from the United States Small Business Administration (SBA). The STEP grant program offers financial assistance to eligible Massachusetts small businesses seeking new and increased export sales of their goods and services. The grant program is intended to help offset international business development and related marketing costs for small businesses.

- What are the requirements for a small business to meet US Small Business Administration (SBA) definition of small business?
 - Please refer to the SBA Website for the definition:
<http://www.sba.gov/content/what-sbas-definition-small-business-concern>
- What are the Department of Commerce's Gold Key services? What are the other services?
 - The Gold Key Service is an in-country appointment service that matches U.S. organizations with the best prospective partners via customized meetings that occur in the specific market(s). There is typically a minimum of 6-8 week lead time to use this service, but it can be longer depending upon previous commitments at the Department of Commerce overseas office. Thus, it's recommended that Gold Key Service requests be submitted as soon as possible.
 - Information about the Department of Commerce's services can be found here:
http://export.gov/salesandmarketing/eg_main_018195.asp
 - Please contact the Dept. of Commerce in Boston. The Director for Massachusetts is Jim Paul, jpaul@trade.gov, 617 565-4304
- How do we access those services?

- Contact your local Department of Commerce office. [See above.]
There are four Trade Specialists who cover Massachusetts:
 1. Jim Paul, Director, Greater Boston; jpaul@trade.gov
 2. Maryanne Burke, Southeastern MA; maryanne.burke@trade.gov
 3. Michelle Ouellette: North Shore and Northwest of Boston; michelle.ouellette@trade.gov
 4. Melissa Branzburg: Central and Western MA; Melissa.branzburg@trade.gov
- Are there other services that can help with my international business development?
 - Yes. The Massachusetts Export Center provides export counseling, technical assistance and international business development assistance, including identification of overseas distributors and trade shows. For further information, visit www.mass.gov/export.
- How do we find out about trade shows? MOITI's trade missions? DOC's trade missions?
 - For a list of international trade shows that have been certified by the US Department of Commerce check out: <http://export.gov/tradeevents/index.asp>
 - For MOITI's International Trade Show List that targets 40 countries with over 300 trade shows check out <http://www.mass.gov/moiti/> or contact Diana LaMuraglia at 617 830 5405
 - For information on US Department of Commerce Missions and Conferences contact Jim Paul, Director of the US Department of Commerce in Boston at jpaul@trade.gov
 - For customized research on international trade shows, contact Paula Murphy at the Massachusetts Export Center at 617-973-8664.
 - For Department of Commerce: see above
- Are there training programs available to help my firm learn about export opportunities and procedures?
 - Yes. The Massachusetts Export Center offers a wide range of export training programs for both active exporters and new-to-export firms. Upcoming export training programs are listed here: <http://www.mass.gov/export/events.htm>.
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- How much job creation and estimated increased export is required to qualify for this grant?
 - The strength of a grant is based on three criteria:
 - Likelihood that the project/initiative will lead to new or increased export sales of goods and services
 - Likelihood that the project/initiative will lead to job creation in Massachusetts
 - Applicant's demonstrated commitment to increasing export sales of its good or services
- What is the maximum amount that can be received for the grant?
 - Grants under the STEP Program will be capped at \$10,000 per business to reimburse for costs associated with projects, activities or services undertaken during the period September 30, 2012 to September 30, 2013. Each grant recipient will be required to provide a match to cover 25% of the total approved cost for any project, activity or service.
- Is there a minimum amount that can be received for the grant?
 - No
- Is the goal to give more money to fewer companies or less money to more companies?
 - That depends upon the response and upon the demonstrated need of the company and the strength of its application.
- What kind of support will MOITI and MEC provide in the consultation period?
 - MOITI will provide support on trade show consultation.
 - The Massachusetts Export Center will provide customized export development assistance to all STEP grant participants. This may include export strategy development, international market assessment, identification of export channel partners, identification of overseas trade shows, and more. The Export Center will also provide technical assistance on the logistical, regulatory, legal and financial aspects of the export process. Contact them at: www.mass.gov/export or (617) 973-8664.
- Is there preference given to companies that export to certain countries?
 - No. Each application will be judged on the strength of its plan.

- The SBA places no preference on export destination.
- Is there preferences given to companies that have exported before?
 - No. Applications are judged on the strength of the company's international marketing plan.
- Is a non profit organization that assists businesses with exporting and business development eligible to apply for this grant opportunity?
 - SBA Defines a small business as one that is independently owned and operated, is for profit and is not dominant in its field.
- Can a company that provides training services for other companies overseas apply for grant funds to advertise their services overseas and pay for translations of their website?
 - Localization services are eligible to be covered by the grant. Staffing and travel costs are not eligible to be covered.
- When do trade shows need to take place in order to be eligible for the grant?
 - Trade shows and other international marketing activities, such as trade missions, need to take place between 9/30/2012 and 9/30/2013 in order to be eligible for the STEP grant.
- Is a company required to register as an LLC or Corporation in MA before they apply for the grant? Is a company required to obtain a Federal EIN before they apply for the grant?
 - Companies need to meet the SBA definition of a small business to be eligible to apply for the grant.
 - The definition can be found here:
<http://www.sba.gov/content/what-sbas-definition-small-business-concern>
- In order to reach the goals of recruiting clients in China/Asia for American products and services, companies are required by foreign governments to open an office and hire consultants and employees in their countries to do marketing. Will the grants cover those costs?
 - Funds to cover staffing and travel costs are not eligible to be covered by the grant. Travel costs can be applied to the 25 percent match requirement of the grant.
- What percent of international travel costs will be covered by the grant?
 - Travel costs are not eligible to be covered by the grant. Travel costs can be applied to the 25 percent match requirement of the grant
- Are local translation services covered by the grant?
 - Localization services are eligible to be covered by the grant.

- If a company is bringing in employees of distributors to train them so they can be service technicians on their products can they apply for the grant to cover the cost of training?
 - That would not be eligible to be covered by the grant.